

Fred's Funeral. FROM A LADY'S SCRAP-BOOK.

"Yes, aunt, you must excuse me." "But, Fred..."

"There are no buts about it, my dear aunt. I cannot and will not be taken down to the drawing-room to-night."

"Then I shall certainly be compelled to excuse you," I replied, striving hard to keep back the tears which some way would fill my eyes every time I attempted to reason with the noble fellow lying so helpless before me.

Months before the opening of this story Fred Travers, in attempting to ascend a scaffolding raised upon a building of which he was the architect, was precipitated to the pavement, striking upon his feet.

"Well," said I, taking his outstretched hand, "what is it?"

"Oh, nothing, aunt; only I have had a funeral; and the strangest part of all is, I was chief mourner. I have buried all my youthful hopes and aspirations; and henceforth there will be no more smiling over the inevitable."

"Since my nephew's accident, I had not held my usual Wednesday evening receptions; but he was now so far recovered that I thought it best to begin again. All my attempts to have him make one of the party were useless. He saw that I was grieved, and said, with a bitter smile played round his handsome mouth, 'It would be a pretty sight now, wouldn't it, to see me, a great strapping fellow, six feet in my stockings, carried by a footman down into the parlor?'"

"But, Fred, Ben can take you down before any one comes. And all of my friends know that I never entertain company after eleven; so you will not become tired of sitting."

"My dear, precious little aunt, don't you see that I am not yet able to conquer the mortification this helplessness entails upon me? I shall lie on the sofa in the library, and you can leave the doors open so that the strains of music will float up to me; and I shall enjoy myself quite as much as if one of the crowd."

"I don't know why I was unable to keep my thoughts with the company assembled; but they would stray off up stairs, and several times I caught myself whispering, 'Poor Fred! poor Fred!'"

"The belle of the evening was a Miss Griffin, an intimate friend of one of my boarding-school cousins, but a stranger to me. She sang exquisitely, played with a skill truly professional, conversed intelligently and intelligibly; and these latter accomplishments were so rare among young ladies generally, that I found myself quite attracted to her. Some one volunteered to play a waltz, and as the young folks flew round to the fascinating strains of Strauss, I ran up stairs to see how Fred was enjoying himself. The gas was turned quite low, but the grate sent out a cheerful light which illuminated the center of the room leaving the sides and corners in deep shadow."

"What a sight met my eyes! Miss Griffin, supposing herself the sole occupant of the room, had taken a seat upon the carpet in front of the fire; and there, her quaint little head bent on one side, canary fashion, she sat muttering to herself. I stopped and listened; I couldn't help it to save my life."

"Why, isn't this jolly! This seems homelike. I don't believe I like parties. Oh! I forgot; my boot hurt me. That's my excuse for running away from that horrid waltz. I wonder what dreadful creature first conceived the idea of waltzing! He had my way; he should hop through all ages, and on one foot too! Heigho! a nice fry; how cheerfully our library used to be something like this before papa died. Oh, dear! There isn't a bit of happiness in the world unless one has somebody to love one!"

"And then I knew the little creature was sobbing. Now, that was too bad. What could I do? Nothing evidently. What would Fred do? Keep very quiet, and allow her to depart in total ignorance of his presence. But this little episode would leave a deep and lasting impression, I who knew Fred so thoroughly, perfectly understood."

the moment, he had ceased to think of himself and his infirmity. "I am Mrs. Andrews' nephew, at your service."

"Let us be friends," she said, sweetly and I knew then, just as well as I know now, that Maggie Griffin's hand lay in that of the invalid.

"I don't want to say I am sorry for you," she continued, "because I think there are few who like to be pitied. It don't seem to me that I should care much about walking; that is, if I had plenty of money, and somebody to care for me, and lots of books!"

"But the tremulant in the girl's voice betrayed her, and the next moment she was sobbing convulsively. Quick steps ascended the stairs, and I moved away from the threshold, very much like a person caught in the act of stealing."

"I never heard Maggie sing so well," observed a lady friend. "She really excels herself."

"How did you like the singing, Fred?" I asked the next morning, at breakfast. "It was delicious. Of all the contrasts I ever heard, that was the richest. But who was the fair vocalist? for of course she is fair."

"A stranger, Fred," I answered carelessly, glancing at his handsome face. "A Miss Griffin—Maggie Griffin, I believe they call her."

"His face was like that of an angel for a moment; inexpressible satisfaction was depicted on every lineament; but it gradually faded, and the old patient, sombre look resumed its place. Not another word was spoken."

"The next two months Fred received many fine perfumed notes, and I noticed that Ben (the footman) made trips to the post-office more frequently than formerly. In the meantime I had met the young lady on several occasions, and we had become very good friends; but I kept my own counsel. I noticed that for several days Fred had looked exceedingly sad and careworn. My first thought was not to remark upon it; but when I saw the quiver of the poor fellow's lip, I could keep silent no longer."

"Well, dear, what is it?" I asked again. "Oh, aunt, I have been trying to have another funeral, but the body refuses to be buried. I dug the grave, but the rest is beyond me."

"It seems to me, Fred, that if I were in your place, I should not be desirous of taking on myself the duties of a professional undertaker. Whether you can walk again or not, you have probably a long life before you; and my advice is to allow all the plants which Providence in its goodness sends to your garden—for some unknown reason, once laid so desolate—to blossom and bear fruit. Throw nothing away which is holy, and calculated to lessen your burden."

"Aunt, what do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Just then Ben stuck his head in the door. 'Miss Griffin wishes to see Mrs. Andrews and Mr. Traver immediately.' 'Good gracious! exclaimed Fred. 'Show her up, Ben,' I ordered. 'But, aunt, not here. You don't—that is—I never, you see—'"

"But the sudden entrance of the young lady put an end to all indecision. 'I am so glad to find you both together!' she exclaimed walking straight to the side of Fred's chair. 'This letter will explain why I am here. Allow me to read it.' 'Please don't!' implored Fred, recognizing his own chirography. 'Very well, then,' said she, folding the note. 'But, Mrs. Andrews, your nephew and I have corresponded for two months. I love him, and he loves me. This morning I received this cruel note. He has irrevocably determined, he says, not to allow this love to go on another day—that he will not do me to the life such a love will entail. Who ever heard of such cruel nonsense? As if he had it in his power to put an end to my love, or his own either!' and her eyes filled with tears."

"Oh, Maggie!" whispered Fred, looking steadfastly out of the window; "you don't know what you are talking about." "Yes I do, dear," she replied, sweetly. "If we were poor, it would make a difference, I suppose; and yet I scarcely think it could. You are rich, and so am I. And, Fred Travers, you will walk again one of these days. I believe Heaven itself has whispered that in my ear. If you don't love me say so, and I will go away and never trouble you again."

"Heaven bless you, darling! I love you more than myself a thousand times over. You shall stay." That was what Fred said. "What did I do? Looked on a moment at the little figure kneeling beside my nephew's chair, while he laid his hands gently on the curly head, thanking Heaven, I know, for the blessings of his life, walked out to my own room, and had a good cry, woman fashion. Two years have passed since then, and Fred walks now as well as any one."

BY C. C. NORTHROP.

Abijah Simpkins was the most patient man we ever knew. In his life he had enough to try the patience of a saint, yet he maintained his imperturbability, and was never known to speak an angry word or give an angry look.

If ever a man deserved canonization, it was Abijah; his wife kept up a cannonade of vituperative adoration nearly every minute he was in the house. His universal placidity would sometimes rouse the female Simpkins to such a pitch that dishes from the table and small articles of furniture would fly about the room promiscuously, and Mr. S. would be compelled ignominiously to flee from the citadel.

Simpkins had a prosperous business in an interior city, and he was one of the most generous of men; no wish of his wife, however extravagant, was ungratified, yet nothing suited her; articles that she herself selected would rot with a day; and on poor Simpkins's head were poured the entire vials of her nonsensical wrath.

Previous to marriage Mrs. S. had appeared as entirely destitute of temper as her lover; and Simpkins thought in securing such a wife he was securing a priceless treasure; but marriage changed the colour *de rose* to colour *de diable*.

Mrs. S. had a cousin of the male persuasion; he possessed a large, coarse person, surmounted by an amazing shock of red hair, of the fineness of swine's bristles.

Although a cousin somewhat remote, he never was far distant from Simpkins's house. Being stout and too lazy to work, he at Mrs. S.'s solicitation, became an inmate of her home, and his support devolved on the family.

Abijah accidentally entered his parlor at an inopportune moment one day, and discovered Mrs. S. and her cousin in close embrace, drinking sweetness long drawn out, from darning lips. He was assailed by Mrs. S., with the pleasing salutation: "Prying sneak, what do you want here?"

"Nothing, my love—yes, there is, I want a book which I came for," replied Simpkins. "Well, take it, and relieve us of your hateful presence. Cousin Hiram has met with a severe loss; he has just received news of the death of a second cousin in India, whom he has never seen, and I am trying to assuage his grief." Here cousin Hiram commenced to sob. "Now if you have found your book, take yourself off, and don't again interrupt me when I am consoling my poor, forlorn orphan relative."

"Certainly not my love, excuse me," and, exit Simpkins. When all were retired for the night, and the usual curtain lecture commenced, Mrs. S. dilated to Simpkins on the enormity of his offense in entering unbidden where sacred grief was holding sway.

"My dear," said Simpkins, "could you not assuage your relative's grief in some other manner? Do you think the position in which I found you was hardly appropriate?"

Now the vials of wrath were fully unloosed. S. retreated, after receiving a slight scalp wound, and spent the night in another apartment. Mrs. Simpkins, after removing the loose change from her husband's clothing, pitched them into the hall, locked the door, and regained her bed to meditate and dream.

A suspicious man would have discovered with "half an eye" that Mrs. S. was growing remarkably affectionate towards cousin Hiram; but Simpkins was not a suspicious man. He daily saw the evening looks and actions, and at the table the choicest dainties placed on cousin Hiram's plate. He did not remonstrate if he did remark those significant indications; he merely retained his usual placidity.

Returning one day from business at an earlier hour than usual, Abijah let himself in with a latch key, and proceeded directly to his sleeping apartment to perform his ablutions; removing his coat, he poured some water into the washbasin and commenced washing. A noise from the other side of the room attracted his attention and caused him to turn his head. What did he see? In his marital couch were reposing the forms of his wife and cousin Hiram. What did he do? He merely said, "excuse me, my dear," and went on with his washing.

Mrs. S. soon found her tongue and ordered him out of the room. "But where shall I go?" said S.; as soon as "I have finished my ablutions I will retire."

and took to his home a new wife who proved a most exemplary woman. The old adage "patient waiters are no losers," had an exemplification. Abijah was reaping his reward.

One evening Abijah and his wife were sitting cozily before the fire, when they heard a loud and peremptory ring from the door bell, shortly followed by another.

The servant who went to the door returned to the parlor with the message that a lady with a child desired to see Mr. Simpkins immediately, on private and important business.

"Show her into the library, Jane," said Mr. S., "and immediately light the gas and start a fire. I will be with her in a moment."

When Simpkins entered the library he beheld before the fire, just kindling into a blaze, a woman shabby and dirty, holding a child in her arms; she stood with her back partially towards him; hearing the door close, the woman turned about, put the child on the floor and made a rush for Abijah; before he could retreat he was in the arms of the female, whom he speedily recognized as his former wife.

As hastily as possible he disengaged himself, and with gentle force seated the woman in a chair. While this was going on the neglected baby set up an obstreperous yelling, to which the former Mrs. S. paid no attention, but fell on her knees before Simpkins, and raising her hands in an imploring attitude, she in the most piteous strains begged her dear Abijah to take her back to his hearth and home.

"Where is cousin Hiram?" said Mr. S., when the woman was forced to hold up for want of breath, and the child was forced to stop yelling for a moment or choke to death.

"He hasly deserted me in a distant city, after he had spent all my money; and I have walked nearly all the way here," sobbed the former Mrs. S. "Now, won't you take me back?"

"But your request is impossible," calmly replied Simpkins, "I have been divorced from you, and for a year have been married to another woman."

"And will you desert me and your own child?" said the former Mrs. S., in a voice which was gradually assuming the crescendo, and taking up the child which had resumed his wailing, she held him towards Simpkins, who commenced to back toward the door in order to escape from the storm which he saw rising.

"Madam," said he, "you will observe that child has a head of a decidedly reddish cast, while both your hair and my own are of a dark hue. I cannot own the child to be my offspring nor give you shelter in this house; so you must immediately depart." This was spoken in an unforced tone, and as he spoke he had nearly reached the door; the woman was too quick to follow, she seized the child on the floor, and in a moment had Simpkins by the shoulder and flung him back into the centre of the room where he landed against a heavy chair, which was overturned, and he fell to the floor; then the late Mrs. S. showed she had not forgotten her old tricks; she seized a large spittoon but it was too heavy for her; in her haste to throw it at her fallen foe, it slipped from her hands and went through the window causing a terrible crash; the child on the floor had set up a yell that could be heard half a dozen blocks off.

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